

A Note on Arm. *išxan* 'ruler'

JOHN A. C. GREPPIN

Cleveland State University

The correspondence between Arm. *išxan* "ruler" and Hitt. *išhan-* 'id' has long been the key-stone in the Armeno-Hittite loan theory. Surely it is a clear example of phonetic and semantic harmony between the two languages, and a correspondence that would seem difficult to dislodge. The coördination was first made by Martirosyan (1924.458-9), though he proposed not a loan correspondence, but rather a genetic origin for the Armenian word that was parallel to the development of the word in Hittite. The next year P. Jensen (1925.82) suggested the loan relationship, a view that was repeated in Yerevan by Kapantsian (1956.81, 392). This etymology has since been mentioned with some frequency in the West (Schultheiss 1961.22; Greppin 1980.204 [additional bibliography can be found in Weitenberg 1979.73]).

Hübschmann, in his *Armenische Grammatik*, ignored what might have been the obvious correspondence of Arm. *išxan* with Iranian words derived from the root *xšā- "to rule." His judgment, usually quite sound, was not contradicted until Benveniste (1929.7-9) put into writing what others had perhaps suspected. Benveniste stated that Arm. *išxan* was directly from Iranian *xšāna- by loan, a form that can be further coupled with such Middle Iranian forms as Sogd. 'ğš'wn (*axšāvan), the less diagnostic Kh. Saka šsau- "official title," and of course NPer. šāh "king." No Parthian form is known, but its lack is not crucial to Benveniste's suggestion.

A principal difficulty with Benveniste's etymology was the lack of any parallel in Armenian for the metathesis of MPer. xš- to an Arm. *išx-* or even *Všx-*. Thus Benveniste's argument could not meet with the level of support that could be provided the Hittite correlation since problems existed on a phonetic level with the Iranian suggestion that did not exist in the Hittite parallel.

There is some fresh evidence that can be pointed to which would provide additional support for Benveniste's suggestion, evidence which might tip the balance away from Hittite origin. Metathesis of Iran. xš- in a loan to Armenian can be noted in the

FOOTNOTES

¹The exact etymology of the Iranian word is open to considerable discussion. An article in Altheim (1970.528-537) discusses, among other things, the rapport between the Armenian and Iranian forms, but the importance of this article is exaggerated. Other pertinent comments can be found in Frye (1956.518) and Szemerényi (1975. 354-392). The question, still undecided, about the exact form of the Proto-Iranian root does not in any way effect the Armeno-Iranian parallel, which is secure.

There is also a chance that the metathesis in Arm. iṣḫan occurred in the Iranian period, for an ostracon discussed in Altheim (1953.16-18) seems to demonstrate, in Pahlevi, the form 'šḫn:

mn 'šḫn msys[t...

"Von dem iṣḫan Masiš[t..."

ḫṣry ḫštrpl...

"Schloss des Satrapen[..."

²The Avestan root is xšaya- 'Herrscher, Fürst, König'; Skt. kṣi- (kṣī-). The development of Av. xšaθra-, Skt. kṣatra- is secondary and somewhat perplexing.

³Armenian also has a productive suffix -an which is most likely an Iranian loan (Greppin 1973-74, 1975).